



Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: September 9, 2020

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom)

Minutes

1. Administration

Members in Attendance: Dan Amstutz, Aravind Basavapathruni, Michael Barry, Wayne Chouinard, Lenard Diggins, Ray Jones, Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis, Howard Muise, Tycho Nightingale, Scott Smith, Laura Swan, Shoji Takahashi.

Members Missing: Corey Rateau

Members of Public in Attendance: Galen Mook, Paul Schlichtman, Jo Anne Preston and several others.

The Chair read the script for remotely conducted meetings, referred the members to the agenda attachment entitled “Governor Charles Baker’s 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law,” announced that the meeting was being recorded and reviewed the meeting ground rules.

The minutes of the August 12, 2020 meeting were approved on a roll call vote.

The Chair noted that correspondence had been received from Marie Kreplke, Select Board Administrator, forwarding a request by the Board for TAC to consider the intersection of Chestnut Street and Mystic Street. A working group consisting of Wayne Chouinard, Howard Muise, Jeff Maxtutis, Corey Rateau, Dan Amstutz and Paul Schlichtman was convened to address the request.

Two new members joined the committee as full members – Shoji Takahashi and Thouis (Ray) Jones, and one new associate member was added – Michael Barry.

2 Public Comments

Donna Kelly requested an update on the proposed Shared Streets plan for Mary St. from Dan. She expressed concern that not all the neighbors supported all elements of the plan and wanted to make sure their concerns had been considered, especially the concerns that the plan did not include traffic calming elements to reduce traffic speeds or a public education program about the No Turn restrictions on Lake Street.

Dan indicated he thought it would be best to proceed with the application for funds from the State because the Town will rely on State funding to implement the plan and time is of the essence to obtain funding. Dan indicated that the money is intended for a temporary installation of measures, some of which eventually might become permanent. He did note that the State money could not be used for public education or enforcement. Dan believes that everyone shares the same goal and that changes to the plan could be made after the funding is approved. Dan indicated he has been working with a core group of six or seven residents from the area.

Mark from the public asked about what was going to happen about Chestnut St. He stated someone needs to be done before another serious or fatal accident occurs. He believes the Town has taken too long to address this issue. The Chair pointed out that there is an item on the agenda regarding this issue and that the TAC was formerly asked to review the situation in an August 18 letter from the Select Board (see discussion of correspondence received above).

Len Diggins asked about who owns the intersection of Broadway and Alewife Brook Parkway (ABP). The intersection is located in Somerville but ABP is a DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) roadway. Dan indicated he did not know who is responsible for the intersection.

3 Town Issues/Activities

A Wayne Chouinard provided an update from the Department of Public Works:

DPW is preparing to repave Lake St. in conjunction with the completion of construction of the traffic signal at the Bikeway..

The completion of handicap ramps, removal of the old signal equipment at Brooks Ave., paving Lake Street and finishing the hardscaping at the crossing are the remaining items to complete

the signal installation at the Bikeway crossing and the upgrade of the Brooks signal.

Completed pavement preservation in the Morningside area will take place in the fall.

Good progress is being made on the sidewalk project in the center to replace the existing red brick sidewalks; work has been completed on Broadway, Alton St. and Medford St. Work is now proceeding on the south side of Mass Ave. between Swan Pl. and Franklin St. It's not clear when the work will be completed. It was originally expected to be done by the end of September but has been delayed because of the COVID 19 pandemic.

A lingering issue with the Mystic/Summer traffic signal has been resolved by Eversource. This included installing new equipment in the controller, providing a consistent underground power source and upgrading signal cabinet. The work will be done before winter.

A comment was made that the Brooks St./Lake St. intersection does not provide sufficient time to cross in the crosswalk. Wayne indicated he crossing time with the new signal will be set according to current guidelines.

Scott asked about bike accommodation and parking on Lake St. Dan indicated there is no parking on Lake St. and thinks that there is room for bike accommodation. This is important because Arlington is about to become part of the Bluebike system and it would be helpful to have bike accommodation between the Bikeway and the bike accommodation on Acorn Park Dr. There was further discussion about the using the Design Matrix and it was decided any further discussion should be held offline.

- B** There was no update from the Police Department.
- C** Dan Amstutz provided an update from the Department of Planning and community Development.

Somerville is proposing a redevelopment project in Clarendon Hill that would include razing 1940s housing and building replacement plus additional housing in its place. The project is in the area of Powder House Boulevard and Alewife Brook Parkway (ABP). The ENF (Environmental Notification Form) for the project currently is under MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Policy

Act) review, including for traffic. The DPCD will provide comments to MEPA.

Thorndike Place (Mugar property) will be back in this fall for review. The proposed 40B project has been revised and an updated traffic analysis is being prepared. A second traffic consultant has been hired to provide a peer review of the traffic assessment.

4 Nomination of Shoji Takahashi as Secretary.

Shoji was approved unanimously by roll call vote to be TAC Secretary

5 Bluebikes in Arlington

Dan reported on the expansion of Bluebikes into Arlington. Six stations will be installed in Town with the first two to be installed tomorrow at the Bikeway at the Railroad parking lot and the Bikeway at Linden St. The additional four locations include Grafton St. at Mass Ave. and at Broadway (to be installed next Tuesday), the Bikeway at Thorndike Field, and Mass Ave at Broadway. Some stations will be kept in place through the winter depending on utilization.

6 Arlington High School

Howard presented the final recommendations of the Arlington High School (AHS) working group on the Traffic Impact and Analysis Study (TIAS) for the new high school. The TIAS recommended installation of three traffic signals at Grove St. and Mass Ave., Grove St. and Summer St., and Millbrook Rd. at Mill St. The working group was concerned about using the traffic projections in the report as the basis for installing signals because of the change in traffic patterns, a new major entrance at the back of the school, and the proposed access to the school from the Minuteman Bikeway. All of these factors made projecting future volumes very difficult. The working group recommended waiting until the school opens and basing the decision on the traffic signals on actual traffic volumes.

The TIAS also recommended a pull out area on the eastbound side of Summer St. at the path to the Minuteman Bikeway from the sidewalk. This would allow pedestrian access to the school from Summer St. As with the proposed signals, the working group recommended waiting until the school opens to see how much drop-off activity occurs at that location.

There were two recommendations in the TIAS regarding the pedestrian signal at the Mass Ave. crosswalk in front of the school. The current time for pedestrians to cross does not meet current standards in the MUTCD (Manual for Uniform Control of Traffic Devices). The TIAS also noted that signal at Schouler Ct. had a misaligned pedestrian signal head and a problem with a pedestrian call button. In both cases, the working group recommended upgrading the signals in the near term.

The traffic report considered the possibility of installing a bicycle track in the westbound direction between the crosswalk at CVS and Schouler Ct. The report concluded a bicycle track was not feasible in this location because the roadway cross section was too narrow to accommodate the cycle track along with the existing lane use (one travel lane in each direction plus a center turn lane).

The group thought a cycle track may be necessary to prevent vehicles from driving across the bike lane to reach the curb for drop-offs and pick-ups. The cycle track would be adjacent to the curb and the fire lane moved between the track and westbound travel lane. A raised median would separate the track from the fire lane. The working group felt that the cycle track should be given further consideration by assuming elimination of the center turn lane to provide the necessary width for the cycle track. With no planned driveways on the north side of Mass Ave. the center turn lane would be used only by westbound traffic. The elimination of the turning lane would allow for a wider westbound travel lane which would allow drivers to pass around left-turning vehicles. Two concepts were considered: one would eliminate parking on the south side to provide better accommodation for an eastbound bike lane and slightly wider travel lanes. The second would keep the parking lane and would accommodate narrower travel lanes, bike lanes and buffers between traffic and the bike lanes.

Paul Schlichtman requested that this issue be discussed with the school Committee, the Building Committee, and the Public Relations Committee. He expressed concern about removing parking from an area that already has a lack of parking.

Wayne Chouinard asked about who the cycle track would serve. Dan responded that it be both Mass Ave. bikers traveling through the area and going to the high school. Wayne further asked why do high school bikers need to pass by the building to reach Schouler Ct. when bike parking could be provided at both ends of the building. It was suggested that with a new major entrance at the back of the building, some bikers may wish to go to Schouler Ct. to reach the back of the building. Jeff reminded the TAC that the consultant dismissed the idea of a bike track and working is suggesting that it be considered further.

7 Appleton St./Mass Ave.:

Howard had hoped to update the committee on the progress of the Design Review Committee but he had received no information by the time of the meeting. Wayne and Dan also had no new information.

8 Thompson School Traffic Calming:

Scott Smith reported he had made a site visit and annotated a map with locations of missing signs. He'll send it to Wayne who'll follow up with Dan in DPW.

Laura Swan spoke to the Thompson School Principal who said school starts September 21st. She suggested it would take to mid-October70 for things to settle down. Because of the hybrid system, enrollment on any given day will be much lower than before the pandemic. Laura felt we could still collect data and see how things are operating with the pandemic.

9 Chestnut Street Crossing:

Wayne reported that do not block the markings had been put on Chestnut St. at the intersection with Chestnut Terr. and the Russell Common Lot driveway. He indicated that when this season ends, he will be able to draw up some ideas for Chestnut St. Howard said we would like to conduct an informal study of how people cross Chestnut Street, but would face the same problem of activity not being representative of normal conditions. Seniors are not going out as much as they used to due to COVID-19.

Jo Anne Preston expressed frustration with the lack of progress since the Ann Derossier was killed in the crosswalk on New Years Eve. The working group should consider what is best for pedestrians and not focus on cost. She suggested a two part plan, including short term measures such as bump outs and looking for funding for a blinking light like the one on Mill St. Wayne suggested that the crosswalk should not be in its current location based on engineering standards.

Ryan suggested that the westbound approach to the crosswalk should be narrowed to one lane and install a no parking area. He also said moving the crosswalk is not an acceptable solution. Ben Johnson expressed his concern trying to cross with small children. Paul avoids crossing at Mystic St. because of the right-turn ramps. He suggested considering bump outs. Mark reiterated that the westbound approach be narrowed to one lane. Beth said Arlington should be a pedestrian

friendly town and that should be the focus of improvements in the area. Maureen Crew suggested solar powered lights to light the crosswalk when it's dark. Marci, daughter of Ann, expressed her sorrow at losing her mother and asked whether a flashing light could be installed at the crosswalk.

10 Appleton St. at Park Ave.:

Howard asked Wayne if he had been able to look into Town funding to conduct a traffic simulation of the Park Ave. intersections at Mass Ave., Appleton St. and Florence Ave. Wayne said he would follow up with Mike Rademacher.

11 Mass Ave Crosswalks at Water Street, Town Hall, and Academy Street: Dan Amstutz did counts of the crossing at Town Hall:

Jeff indicated that there was not much to report at this time but said that the working group would meet soon to come up with some ideas that they would then share with Corey and Wayne. Howard noted that this project is TAC initiated and not the result of any particular incident. He also noted that TAC had previously reviewed the crosswalk at Water St. and made both short-term recommendations, which were implemented, and long-term recommendations. Beth uses the Water St. crosswalk and asked they not be removed. She also asked if flags could be put at Chestnut St. Paul asked if the two side streets at Water St. could be marked with a right-turn arrow and suggested that the No Left-Turn signs be replaced with Right-Turn Only signs.

12 TAC Representative to Mass Ave./Appleton St. Design Review Committee:

Howard recommended Jeff Maxtutis as the representative because of his traffic engineering experience and because he played an effective role on the Lake St./Bikeway Design Review Committee. Mike Barry asked if could help as an assistant, noting that he has a civil engineering background. Howard suggested Mike serve as TAC's alternative representative when Jeff cannot attend meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.